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CIA Guidelines Called 'Sweeping Grant'

Associated Press

The Reagan administration's proposed CIA guidelines appear to be a "sweeping grant of authority to intelligence agencies to collect information on purely domestic matters," according to a Senate Intelligence Committee analysis.

The analysis highlights the committee's concern that the latest draft of a presidential order may go too far in granting the CIA its first authority to infiltrate and influence domestic groups.

The Associated Press obtained copies of the staff analysis and the proposed order yesterday. The draft order was prepared as a replacement for one issued in January, 1978, by then-president Carter.

The analysis said many points in the draft require explanation from the administration, including whether it would drop the ban on opening mail in U.S. postal channels.

The analysis noted that Carter prohibited opening U.S. mail except in accordance with laws requiring a court warrant based on probable cause to believe that the mail contains evidence of a crime.

This restriction is deleted in the Reagan draft, which says, "Nothing in this order shall be construed to authorize any activity in violation of the Constitution or statutes of the United States."

While noting that language, the analysis says another section of the order "clearly delegates authority to the attorney general to approve the warrantless use of techniques such as mail opening that otherwise require a warrant."

Last week, the Senate Intelligence Committee requested on-the-record testimony from the administration on its legal interpretation of the language. The administration refused.

However, Justice Department spokesman Tom DeCair said he believed an agreement was reached yesterday for a department representative to provide some form of on-the-record answers this week.

The House Intelligence Committee also has pressed the administration to clear up legal questions, and several congressional Democrats have criticized the proposed order for providing too few protections for civil liberties.